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PRESS RELEASE

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District Man Sentenced to 48 months for Obstruction of Justice - Impersonated a Prosecutor -

WASHINGTON - Charles A. Barnes, 27, was sentenced today to 48 months of incarceration on an obstruction of justice charge stemming from an incident in which he pretended to be a prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

The sentencing took place this morning before the Honorable Judge Ronna L. Beck in the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. Barnes, of Oxon Hill, Md., pleaded guilty to the charge on May 25, 2010.

According to facts presented to the court, Barnes telephoned Investigator Robert Thompson of the Howard University Police Department on the morning of August 3, 2009. He falsely identified himself as the Assistant United States Attorney who was prosecuting two misdemeanor cases against him in D.C. Superior Court: one for theft and credit card fraud, and another for assaulting a police officer. Investigator Thompson was the lead detective on Barnes's theft case.

In the effort to have his cases dismissed for want of prosecution, Barnes falsely stated to Investigator Thompson that "he" was trying both cases, and that the trial dates in both cases had been changed. Barnes also requested the phone numbers of the witnesses in both cases so that he could telephone them directly and provide them with the same false information.

Investigator Thompson immediately recognized Barnes's voice and recorded the conversation with a handheld tape recorder. He also provided the defendant with a false phone number for the civilian witness in the credit card fraud case. The phone number actually belonged to a prepaid telephone.

Immediately after concluding his call to Investigator Thompson, Barnes called the prepaid telephone. Metropolitan Police Department Officer Chris Downs answered the call and identified himself by the name of the civilian witness. After falsely identifying himself to Officer Downs as the Assistant United States Attorney handling his two pending cases, Barnes falsely

stated that the pending court date has been changed, and that he would not be needed in court.

Barnes subsequently pleaded guilty in the case charging him with assaulting a police officer. The charge in the second case was dismissed as part of a plea agreement in the prosecution of the obstruction-of-justice matter.

In announcing the sentencing, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the work of Investigator Robert Thompson of the Howard University Police Department, MPD Officer Chris Downs, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily A. Miller, who investigated the case.

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